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January 28, 2023

Dear Environment Committee and Distinguished Chairs:

Re: Raised Bill No. 896: ***AN ACT CONCERNING TREE REMOVAL ON PROPERTIES UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION.***

Thank you for the introduction of this Bill. I support the Bill and have a few suggestions for strengthening it.

1. The notification and hearing process envisaged by Section 1(b) of the Bill is activated by a proposal by DEEP to remove 5 or more trees per acre. Does this process only apply to removal of 5 or more trees *at the same time*? Could DEEP remove 4 trees and then another 4 and then another 4 at well-spaced intervals and not be required to engage in the proposed process? At what point should these removals be aggregated?
2. The requirement in Section 1(e) that replacement trees have “comparable calipers, canopy and aesthetic characteristics” is a good start to ensuring no net loss of cover and that our state parks and campgrounds host not only human visitors but also provide habitat and biodiversity. Section 1(e)’s requirements could be enhanced by requiring that replacement trees, or at least a significant portion of them, be native trees. This requirement would augment the sense of place that people have in our parks, knowing that their park trees belong and are not alien to the area. Native trees also improve the likelihood of planting success, as they are better adapted to our climatic and other conditions, and provide the best habitat and our best shot at helping to restore our ever-dwindling ecosystems. As I have mentioned in other testimony today, while climate change is one of the main drivers of biodiversity loss, destruction of ecosystems undermines nature’s ability to regulate greenhouse gas emissions and protect against extreme weather, thus accelerating climate change (Horizon – The EU Research and Innovation Magazine).
3. It may be that the requirement in Section 1(e) that replanting “be performed in a manner that will yield the establishment of comparable trees” is intended to imply some kind of care and maintenance

requirement for the replacement trees. I would suggest that any such implied requirement be made specific. It is only the care of trees after planting that will ensure success.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my comments.

Sincerely,

Juliet Cain